A FEW

# OBSERVATIONS

UPON THE

## Fighting for PRIZES

IN THE

# BEAR-GARDENS:

BY A

Lover and Well-wiſher, not only to the True and Uſeful Art of the SWORD, but alſo to the Safety and Security of the Perſons of thoſe Brave, Courageous, and Bold Performers in theſe publick Places, for Trial of Skill in this Gentlemany Art.

---

*Ea enim tuta eſt potentia quæ Vitibus ſuis modum imponit.*

AND,

That's an only ſure and general Guard;
Whoſe Croſs, the Blow, as well as Thruſt doth ward.

---

*LONDON:*

Printed in the Year MDCCXV.

# THE PREFACE.

*THE following* OBSERVATIONS *being sent to me by a Friend, who is not only Curious, but also a great Lover of the Art of the* SWORD, *with a Liberty to me to print them, if I judged they might be any Ways useful to the Publick; I have thought fit to do it, not doubting but they will be of Use to all, but, especilly to* SWORD-MEN, *who cannot fail to reap Benefit by the serious Perusal of them, and of the Book to which they relate; the only Design of which, is, no doubt, to put the true Art of Defence with the Sword, against all kind of edged or pointed Weapons, both on Foot and Horse-back, upon a right and solid Foot; for the Benefit and Safety of our Country-men, whether engag'd only Voluntarily for a Prize, or Unfortunately for their Lives.*

# OBSERVATIONS
## UPON THE
## *Fighting for* PRIZES, *&c.*

*SIR,*

BEING a Lover of all kind of Gentlemany Exercises, particularly that of the Sword, I took the Opportunity (having had One or Two of the *Gladiator*'s Bills thrust into my Hand, a few Days after I came to Town) to go along with one of my Acquaintance, who takes Delight in that Divertisement, to the *Bear-Garden* in *Marabone-Fields*, that I might observe if the Performers made good what they asserted in their publick Bills, *viz.* That they were *Masters of the Science* (as they term it) *of Defence*, or rather, *of the true Art of the Sword*; for that includes both the defensive and offensive Part, which are the Whole of the Art.

But, to my great Surprize, these Masters of true Defence, as they call themselves, after they were engag'd, did not above once or twice *Traverse*, or *go about* the Stage; or, in their own Terms, did not finish *One Bout*, when they cut one another; the one upon the Head, and the other in the Breast.

Thought I to my self, if this be the Effects of your Dexterity and Skill in the Art of Defence, a Man may be as well without it; for I am sure, Two who had never before handled a Sword, could not have cut one another sooner, nor more, in so short a Time, as these Two Pretenders to the true Art of Defence did.

This made me conclude, that I had all along been in a Mistake, in fancying that Two dextrous and adroit Swordmen could fight very smartly, and in good Earnest, and not receive, for a considerable Time, any Wound from one another, but what would be slight and no Ways disabling; and this

this Thought prevail'd with me for ſome Days, during which Time, I run down and undervalu'd in all Companies, nay, even in the publick Coffee-houſes, the Art of the Sword, as of no Uſe, becauſe I had ſeen that thoſe, who pretended to be Maſters of it, could not, for above one Minute, defend themſelves from one another's Blows.

This was the Effect and Conſequence of what I obſerv'd, not only that Day, but alſo Two or Three Times ſince, when they likewiſe very ſoon cut one another; until being one Day in the City, and turning over ſome Books in Mr. *Strahan*'s Shop, oppoſite to the *Royal-Exchange*, I by Chance ſee a Book of Fencing, writ by one Sir *William Hope*, which he calls his *New Method of Fencing*; and having the Curioſity to peruſe it, I ſoon begun to alter my Thoughts, and change my Opinion, as to the Inſufficiency of the Art, to defend a Man, for a conſiderable Time, in the Heat of an earneſt Engagement, nay, even in a Rencounter or Duel, for one's Life.

For in this Book he makes it plain, that the Uncertainty theſe Maſters Defence, proceeds not at all from the Imperfection and Inſufficiency of the Art, but from the Openneſs and Uncertainty of the Guard they commonly make uſe of, which is the *Medium* Guard; a Guard liable and expos'd to all the Variety of Leſſons, and Feints, that any Man can think of; and that it is no wonder, that not only purſuing from that very open Guard, but alſo drawing their Parades from it, they meet with that Uncertainty in their Defence, which any, who frequent that Place of publick Tryal of Skill, may eaſily obſerve.

For, altho' Sword-men, as he ſays, *are neither infallible, nor invulnerable*, more than other People, yet it diſcovers a great Imperfection in thoſe who profeſs the Art, when they cannot defend themſelves, by their Dexterity, for a few Minutes; which he aſſerts a true Artiſt is capable to do, nay, even a great deal longer, if he makes uſe of ſuch a true Defence, and cunning Dexterity, as Art can furniſh him with; and which Defence, he ſays, he has improv'd to that Perfection to which it is brought in his *New Method*; and that is, the Defence which he draws from the Hanging

Guard

Guard in Seconde with a ſloping Point; becauſe, from that Guard or Poſture, he draws all his Defence or Croſſes, as well againſt Thruſts as blows; (for he lays down as a Foundation, That all true Defence with any Weapon, depends upon the Croſs it makes upon the Adverſary's Weapon, whatever be the Poſition of the Sword-hand; and that the greater the Croſs is, the more ſlow is the Adverſary's Purſuit, which, by all poſſible Means, we ſhould endeavour to render ſo, and conſequently the more ſecure and certain a Man's own Defence, becauſe, without a Croſs, there's no true Defence; and to ward a Blow, or turn off a Thruſt with the Sword-Hilt, or Shell, ſhows no more Art, than to do it with a Gauntlet, or Head-piece, ſeeing the Blow is by both, not defended by Art, in forming a Croſs, but received upon the Metal, which is Sword Proof,) and from hence aſſerts this ſeeming Paradox.

*That he has brought the Art of Defence, by the right forming of ſuch good Croſſes, to the utmoſt Perfection Humane Nature is capable of, becauſe,* ſays he, *there cannot be a greater than a right Croſs or Angle, formed by any Two Weapons; and that this right angled Croſs, being frequently in ones Defence, drawn from this Guard in Seconde with a ſloping Point, and the greateſt Croſs, making,* as has been ſaid, *the moſt ſecure and ſafe Defence, therefore it is impoſſible for humane Nature to invent a better Defence, than what is drawn from this Guard,* becauſe the greateſt Croſs that can be framed by Two Weapons, for a Man's Defence, is drawn from it; which is indeed a Demonſtration, but what I did not ſo well take at firſt reading, until I more ſeriouſly reflected upon his Argument; *whereas moſt other Guards,* ſays he, *particularly thoſe of the Small-Sword in Quarte and Tierce, in framing their Parades, make but ſmall Croſſes, which gives to the Adverſary frequent Oportunities of making Variety of Feints or falcifying Motions, whereby a Man's Defence is render'd more Uncertain, and conſequently his Perſon more expos'd to his Adverſary's Thruſts*; the very Reverſe of which a Man meets with, who with Cunning and Dexterity makes uſe of his Defence and Croſſes, from this excellent Hanging-Guard in *Seconde*, as he ought.

For, *ſays he*, There is a Cunning and Subtilty, as well as Dexterity, which belongs to the true Art of the Sword, and which but few, profeſſing the Art, are Maſters of; Thruſts and Blows being to be avoided ſeveral other Ways, by a judicious and agile Artiſt, than by always meeting with, and obſtinately oppoſing the Adverſary's Sword; a Thing not known in the *Bear-Gardens*, where, at firſt engaging they come commonly cloſe up to one another, and there with Fury diſcharge repeated Blows, whereby enſue *Contretemps* and grievous Wounds; which does indeed pleaſe the ignorant Mob, but ought to be abominate by all good Artiſts and Men of Judgment, ſeeing it is a moſt ſcandalous Diſparagement to all true Art; which ought to be perform'd, not only with Calmneſs, but with a cautious Vigour and Judgment, otherwiſe ſuch foolhardy Perſons run headlong to their own Deſtruction, which, by a true Art is deſign'd to be prevented; Fencing being at firſt invented and deſign'd chiefly for Defending, and not for Offending; that falling in only by the Way, and moſtly (except upon Neceſſity) to be made uſe of as a Means to effectuate the other main End, which is a Man's Defence and Preſervation of his Life, when in good Earneſt atack'd.

To which, *he ſays*, It may be objected; that what is to be done, had as good be ſoon done; and that Down-head, Slap, Thruſt, and away with it, is much more manly, than to ſtand Shifting and Dalieing, as if a Man were afraid of his Skin, or could not endure the Sight of his own Blood.

To which he Anſwers in the Negative, for, *ſays he*, Whatever Backſword Maſters may venture upon a publick Stage, where they run only the hazard of a few, many Times ſlight, Cuts in fighting for a Prize; yet the Caſe is quite different, when a Man has his Life at Stake, and is lyable to both Stroke and Thruſt; and which, when gone, cannot be recall'd again; ſo that, if ever a Man ought to have his Wits about him, and keep himſelf free from Paſſion, it is, when he is engag'd for Life; that being his All, nay, his very Self; in reſpect whereof the Loſs of the whole World is not ſo much as to be named, or put in the Ballance, eſpecially when

when a Man runs the Hazard, of being in a few Minutes thruſt into, and entring Eternity in violent Paſſion and Blood; A Damping and Dreadful Thought indeed, to any ſerious thinking Chriſtian! and againſt which (as Matters go now a-Days amongſt thoſe who are call'd Men of Honour, who but too often make Trifles the Ground of bloody Quarrels) the true Art of the Sword is a moſt excellent Preſervative.

For, *ſays he*, altho' when the moſt dextrous Sword-men in the World come to be engag'd, the one will certainly, if they continue a while fighting, have the better of, and Maſter the other; there being ſcarcely any ſuch Thing to be found, as a perfect Equality amongſt Men; yet, for the moſt Part, ſuch dextrous Artiſts as are overcome, are commonly ſo, either by being commanded, or diſarmed, or by receiving ſeveral ſlight Wounds, which, altho' not Mortal, yet are ſufficient, at laſt, ſo to diſable them, that they are neceſſitate to ſuccumb, and yeild to their conquering Adverſary; whereas, when People engage without Art, they, commonly with Paſſion, ruſh ſo furiouſly and headlong upon one another, that the Wounds they receive, or exchange, are for the moſt Part Mortal; ſo that the true Benefit all Men reap by Fencing, is, that altho' they cannot always conquer their Adverſaries, or even defend themſelves from ſlight Wounds, yet they ſhall, by their Art, for the moſt Part, both of them ſave their Lives, by receiving only ſuch Wounds, as are at firſt but Sight, altho' diſabling; whereas thoſe *Coups Fourrez*, as the *French* Term them, which are receiv'd full Tilt, and wholly Home, by Ignorants and Maladroits, when in Earneſt engag'd, prove generally not only Diſabling, but Mortal; which Diſadvantage alone, ought, he ſays, to excite and encourage all Gentlemen, not only to the thorough Underſtanding of this moſt uſeful and ſaving Art, but alſo to endeavour to put it always in Practice, with Caution, Vigour, and Judgment; without which, a Man loſes a great deal of the Benefit, which otherwiſe he would reap by his Art.

For,

*He ſays*, he is alſo apt to believe, that the firſt Riſe of People's making uſe of ſharp Weapons did proceed from this: *That in the firſt Ages, ſlender and weak Men found themſelves at a great Diſadvantage, when they came to engage thoſe who were ſtrong and vigorous, either at Hand-Blows or with other blunt Weapons; and to bring themſelves to ſome Equality with ſuch Robuſt and ſtrong Perſons, did invent firſt the* Sabre, *or* Broad-Sword, *whoſe Edges are moſtly made uſe of; but ſtill finding themſelves at a Diſadvantage, by reaſon of the other's great Strength, overpowering them in the Herculian Way of diſcharging their Blows againſt them, which they had not Strength to reſiſt, they did next fall upon the Pointed Weapons, that is* Sheering *and* Small-Sword; *well concluding, that if they could but give a Thruſt, it would do generally more Execution than the others Blows; to obviate which, the Strong and Vigorous Men did, upon the other Hand, invent the Firſt Method to Croſs, and put aſide thoſe dangerous Thruſts, which was the True Foundation, and Riſe of the Art of Defence.*

*At Laſt, when the Generality of People, who were ignorant of this new found out Art, of both Defending and Offending, found themſelves alſo at a great Diſadvantage, when they came to be engag'd with thoſe Weapons, againſt ſuch dextrous Artiſts; they, to render themſelves ſtill in more equal Circumſtances with both ſtrong and weak Sword-men, did, after the Invention of Gunpowder, endeavour to determine all their Quarrels with Fire-Arms, whereby they render'd the other Arts with the Sword of no Uſe; (a Method frequently taken by many even now a-Days) and which, by the way, ſhows how neceſſary it is for all Sword-men, to be good Marks-men with the Piſtol, as well as dextrous Artiſts with the Sword, that they may not be ſurpris'd with the Attacks of either, but be in* utrumque paratus, *as we ſay, that is equally ready and knowing, to uſe their Piſtol or handle their Sword; ſo, by what has been ſaid, he thinks it very evident, that the Art did at firſt conſiſt chiefly in the Defenſive Part; but that People, when engag'd, falling commonly in Paſſion, could not reſt ſatisfy'd with only defending themſelves, but did alſo, at the ſame Time, endeavour to return upon their Adverſaries, what their Adverſaries intended to put upon them, which was either Blow or Thruſt: And thus they join'd, or added the Offenſive*

*fenſive Part of both Edge and Point, to the Defenſive Part; both which together, do at this Day, contain and make up the whole Art of the Sword.*

He alſo aſſerts Two other chief Advantages this *Hanging-Guard in Seconde* hath above all other Guards; which are *Firſt*, That it is equally uſeful a Foot againſt the Thruſt, as againſt the Blow; and *Secondly*, the only proper Guard a Horſeback, againſt both ſmall and ſheering Sword; for it is hardly poſſible, *ſays he*, to defend a Blow, either a Foot, or Horſeback, with any of the ordinary *Quart* and *Tierce* Parades of the Small-Sword; and if a Small-Sword Maſter ſhall pretend to defend a Blow with the Small-Sword, it will be found that he ſhall immediately (in Place of making uſe of a true ordinary *Quart*, or *Tierce Parade)* fall in to this in *Seconde*, which makes good all that this Author aſſerts of it; ſo that this Guard in *Seconde* being in all Caſes and Circumſtances, a general and moſt ſafe Poſture, from whence ſuch good Cauſes may be made, as will ward and defend, the Attacks of all kind of Weapons, whether only edged, as the Back-ſword, or both edged and pointed, as the Sheering; he therefore earneſtly recommends it to the Publick, and adviſes all Maſters, both of the Back-Sword and Small, to refrain from, and wholly quit their open and unſecure Guards, and uncertain and imperfect Parades, which they can only draw from them, and take themſelves to this Natural, General, and moſt ſecure Guard in *Seconde* with a ſloping Point, from whence may be drawn and formed ſuch good Croſſes, as cannot fail, when made uſe of by a dextrous and judicious Artiſt, to defend him from the Blows and Thruſts of all Weapons, and that as well on Horſe-back as a Foot.

And whereas it is commonly aſſerted by forward Ignorants, that they can eaſily Beat the beſt Sword-man from any nice and formal Guard he can put himſelf in, by a forward and violent Purſuit, *he ſays*, that however other Guards may be liable to this, when made uſe of by half skill'd Sword-men, yet thoſe forward Naturaliſts can never pretend to have that Advantage againſt this

Guard in *Seconde*, becauſe the more vigorouſly a Sword Man is attack'd, who makes uſe of it, the more he is forced to the true Poſture of it, and ſo far from being Beat from it, that he is rather in a manner Beat and Forced to it, ſo ſafe and natural a Poſture is it; ſo that this Aſſertion of beating a Sword-man from his Guard or Defenſive Poſture, is at Bottom falſe, becauſe, whatever Poſture a Sword-man be in, if from that Poſture he make and frame good Croſſes upon his Adverſary's Sword, whatever be the Poſition of the Sword-hand, he can never be ſaid to be beat off his Defence; for when he is a performing of that, he is always upon his Guard or defenſive Poſture: A Guard being only the firſt Poſition of the Body, into which a Man places himſelf at firſt drawing of his Sword, and is always good when the Body is made thereby both thin and ſhort; for ſo ſoon as ever he enters into Action, he commonly goes from the nice Poſture of his Guard, and falls in to the forming of good Croſſes for his Defence; which Croſſes are his only true Guard, and not the Poſture he at firſt put himſelf into.

This Author has a great many other uncommon Poſitions and Directions, quite contrary to what is commonly adviſed and put in Practice by the Generality of Fencing-Maſters; ſuch as, that in making uſe of the common Small-Sword Parades in *Quart* and *Tierce*, a Man is many Times oblig'd, for his better Defence, to frame the Croſs upon his Adverſary's Sword, cloſe almoſt to his own Body, the better to meet with the foible or weak Part of it, otherwiſe he will be fair to have the Thruſt forced home upon him.

That in thruſting a plain Thruſt againſt the ordinary *Quart* or *Tierce* Guards, eſpecially within the Sword, to make it the more ſwift, and to take the better, the Sword's Point ſhould be carried Home upon the ſame Side it is preſented, beyond the Adverſary's Sword-hand, or Wriſt, before ever the Thruſter offer to diſengage whereby the Thruſt, eſpecially by thruſting with the Hand in *Tierce*, will be a great deal more Surprizing and Swift, than when a Man diſengages juſt as his Sword lyes (without this previous advancing Motion upon the ſame Side) and thruſting with his

his Hand in *Quart* upon the Weak of the Adverſary's Sword, which is indeed a nice Direction.

That in Thruſting after Feints, and from Binding, a Man ſhould thruſt at ſome little Diſtance, and evite, or ſhun his Adverſary's Sword as much as poſſible; which is quite contrary to the common Method, becauſe, *ſays he*, As upon the defenſive Part, or Parade, a Man ought always to endeavour to meet with, and oppoſe his Adverſary's Sword; ſo upon the offenſive Part, or purſuit, he ought to ſhun it, the better to prevent his Adverſary's forming a Croſs upon it; whereby his Defence and Parade will be the more uncertain.

That in planting any Thruſt, a Man ought generally, unleſs the open he is to thruſt upon, lye very near to him, ſo to plant it, that his Sword's Point may be as much as poſſible upon a Level with the Sword-Arm, near to the Shoulder-Joint; that being the ſtraiteſt and longeſt Line, and conſequently that which will reach furtheſt; and if he do it not, that it is the better for him, and more dangerous for his Adverſary, to thruſt low towards the Belly, as high at the Breaſt, becauſe the lower Parts of the Body are not only more eaſily pierc'd and wounded, than thoſe about the Breaſt, which are better fenced, by the Cheſts being Cartilagenous and Bony, but alſo lying ſo low, more difficult to defend, by the *Ordinary Quart* and *Tierce Parades*.

And for preventing of *Contretemps*, ſtragling Thruſts, exchanged Thruſts, Thruſts from the *Riſpoſte*, and *Takeing of Time*, all which are different: He adviſes the conſtant Uſe of the left Hand, without which, *he ſays*, it is very difficult to prevent any of them, when engag'd with a forward half-skill'd Antagoniſt; upon which Account, he adviſes all good Sword-men when engaged with ſuch Perſons, to become, if poſſible, the Purſuers, becauſe, when once Ignorants, or half-skill'd Perſons, are forc'd to their Defence, they are commonly done with it; and this is the Reaſon why ſuch Perſons generally purſue at firſt moſt furiouſly when engag'd, knowing their own Weakneſs and Uncertainty in Defending; a very excellent Direction, and which all good Sword-men ought to engrave in their Memories.

That

That one of the chief Reaſons, why the Art of the Sword is ſo much neglected and undervalued by many, proceeds from People's generally looking upon all Gentlemen, who have been but a few Months at School, to be good and dextrous Sword-men; and when ſuch are engag'd and worſted by forward Ignorants, they immediately impute it to the Imperfection of the Art, and not to the unskillfulneſs and maladroitneſs of theſe young Sword-men; for to become a true and skillful Artiſt, requires a very frequent, long, and aſſiduous Practice in School-play, againſt all Kind of Conſtitutions and Tempers; a Calmneſs or Preſence of Mind, a vigorous Agility, and what Crowns all, a ſolid Judgment; to make uſe, in an earneſt Engagement, as well of the Cunning and Subtilty of the Art, as of the moſt Surprizing and Maſculine Leſſons, belonging to it; for, *ſays he*, by ſometimes breaking a little Meaſure, making a Kind of Circular Motion, or yeilding a Foot or Two of Ground, until the Violence of ones Adverſary's Purſuit be over, when a Sword-man has Room for it, he may many Times ſave his Life; when by obſtinately oppoſing a moſt violent Purſuit, from a paſſionate and froward Adverſary, by a continued Defending with the Sword, he may be ſo preſſed upon as to fail in his Parade, or Croſs, and thereby receive a mortal Wound; for whatever may be the miſtaken Notion of ſome nice People, of breaking of Meaſure, and reaſonably yeilding or giving a little Way upon Occaſion; neither Art, nor Honour, oblige a Sword-man to ſtand an immoveable Butt, for his Adverſary to ſtrike and thruſt at; notwithſtanding of which, he very much diſapproves of a too much, or conſtant going back, or rather timerous retiring. This is alſo very Good.

That the ſtrong or weak Parts of a Sword, are not to be conſider'd, ſo much with reſpect to the Ordinary Diviſion of its Blade, into *Fort* and *Foible*, as with reſpect to the Croſs it frames upon the Adverſary's Sword, and Preſſure it makes upon it; either by its own Weight only, or by the Impulſe of the Sword-hand added to it; becauſe, as theſe are, ſo, according to the nice Rules of Art, muſt the *Fort* or *Foible* of a Sword, when in Action, be reckon'd; the moſt Part of a Sword becoming ſometimes thereby all *Fort*, as at other Times

all

all *Foible*, whereby the *Fort* and *Foible* of a Sword, in Place of being fix'd and determin'd, as by the common and ordinary Diviſion thereof, by the Middle, into *Fort* and *Foible*, become, in Action, altogether changeable and unfix'd, and depend wholly upon the framed Croſs, and Preſſure or Impulſe, of the Agent's Sword-hand; All which, at firſt View, ſeem very Odd, and contrary to the true Rules of Art, but upon ſecond Thoughts and ſolid Reaſoning, will be found to be as great Truths in the Art, as they are Niceties unknown to moſt Maſters.

Again, after he has moſt particularly and convincingly anſwer'd all the Objections can be made, by the greateſt Enemy, and moſt caviling Ignorant, againſt the Uſefulneſs of the Art of the Sword, and which diſcovers this Author's Modeſty and Ingenuity; he compares good and dextrous Sword-men to skillful Gameſters, who, altho' they may at firſt ſitting down to any Game, have a bad Run, as they term it, againſt Bunglers, will certainly at laſt carry off their Money; ſo good Sword-men, not pretending to Infallibility, as has been ſaid, may ſometimes come to be worſted by bold unskillful Perſons, but that upon the Main they have a very conſiderable Odds to the better, and will not fail, to ſucceed, once in many Times; which Uncertainty, *ſays he*, ought to humble good Sword-men, and prevent their too much preſuming upon their Art and Dexterity, and alſo, rather make them cautious and backwards, as too haſty and forwards in engaging in any Quarrels, which, without impairing their Reputation and Honour, they can poſſibly prevent, or handſomely decline, at leaſt endeavour to take up and accommodate, by the Interpoſition of judicious and honourable Seconds; The only true End for which they were at firſt deſign'd, and not (according to the unaccountable and moſt unfriendly preſent Cuſtom) to encourage their Principals, and excite perhaps intimate Comarads, only diſobliged for a raſh Expreſſion, or other Trifle, to kill and deſtroy one another, by engaging them in an illegal Duel, or which is no better, a premeditate Rencounter; This as to the Seconds.

And as to the Principals; he hopes that the unreaſonable, as well as ungenerous Cuſtom of ſuffering Seconds, perhaps

not ſo much as Witneſſes to the Quarrel, to engage with them, will be hereafter prevented, and diſcharg'd, their Buſineſs being only, firſt to accommodate Matters, and reconcile Parties, if poſſible, by propoſing a juſt and honourable Satisfaction to the Perſon injur'd; or if that will not do, ſecondly, to ſtand by at a very little Diſtance, with their Swords drawn, to ſee fair Play, and that there be no diſhonourable or ungentlemany Advantage taken by the Parties engag'd, ſo long as they are in Fight, and a determining the Quarrel; and always betwixt Bouts or Breathings, to endeavour, by all Means to perſuade the Parties to an amicable Reconciliation, to prevent the ſheding of more Blood, or perhaps the Loſs of one of their Lives; but it is, *ſays he*, the Work of Principals more than Seconds, to prevent this unreaſonable engaging of Seconds, to fight along with them; for a Second, who is a Man of Honour, cannot hanſomly, nor will not decline engaging with his oppoſite Second, if he deſire it of him; unleſs the Principals interpoſe and prevent it.

And for the more effectually taking up of Quarrels, and preventing of Duels and paſſionate Rencounters, which would be of ſuch Advantage and Benefit to all the *Britiſh*, who are generally ſo Bold and Courageous, as to decline no Manner of Battle, when either provoked, or otherwiſe prompted to it; he lays down a moſt plain and eaſie Scheme, not only for eſtabliſhing a Society of Sword-men, for the greater Encouragement, and better Improvement of the Art; but alſo, for a Court of Honour, ſo very neceſſary and uſeful; and which is ſo much deſired by all peaceable, well natur'd, and truly honourable Perſons of all Ranks, that he hopes it may, in due Time, be offer'd to the Conſideration of King and Parliament, by ſome honourable Member, who is a Lover, not only of the Art of the Sword, but of the Preſervation of his Country men's Lives; where he hopes it ſhall meet with that Encouragement, which the Importance and Nature of ſo good and honourable a Deſign may deſerve, eſpecially conſidering how many private Perſons have of late loſt, or rather thrown away their Lives, in moſt unaccountable and trifling Quarrels, which ſuch a Remedy might, in all probability, have prevented.

*Thus*

*Thus have I not only discover'd to you a few of the many uncommon Positions, and Directions, contain'd in this useful and curious Book, but also given an Account of the Behaviour of most of the* Gladiators *in the* Bear-Gardens, *and how deservedly they assume to themselves, the Gentlemany and Honourable Title of perfect Masters of the true Science of Defence; altho' this Author also acknowledges, that there are some of them very pretty and dextrous Sword-men, did they but make use of such a secure Guard, or Posture, as he recommends, from whence they could easily draw and frame good and safe Crosses, for their more certain Defence; he also approves of Gentlemens frequenting such Places of Tryal of Skill, because it accustoms them to the hearing the Clashing of Weapons, and the seeing Wounds given, and Blood drawn; (altho' I wish this last were seldomer done, for the greater Reputation of the Art) which brings a Man, in a little Time, to value as little the Cut of a sharp Sword, as the Blow of a blunt Stick, or Cudgel.*

*But for the Fisty-Cuff-Battles, or trying of ones Manhood by Boxing, which is of late brought upon the publick Stages, he altogether disapproves of them, as appearing (besides their being Ungentlemany) not only Butcherly, but barbarous and inhuman, and therefore hopes they will be for the future discountinanced and discourag'd, by all Gentlemen of Generosity and Honour, seeing, at best, they can tend to nothing, but to throw those who engage in them, into Decays, or other lingring Diseases, by Reason of the grievous and violent Blows they receive from one another, upon their Heads, Bellies and Stomachs, so that it would grieve and draw Pity from any generous Man's Heart, to see them thus brutishly bruise and maul one another; nay, even to that Degree, that he says he has seen them sometimes carry'd off the Stage, without any Appearance of Life.*

Now, this being so, and this Gentleman so earnestly recommending to all People, the Usefulness and Security of the hanging Guard in *Seconde*, from whence, to draw a general Defence, both a Foot and Horseback, whereby he puts the whole Art of the Sword upon a new Foot, as it were, by rendring the acquiring of it, not only plain and easie, but also short; reducing the defensive Part in a Manner to but Two Motions, for parrying of all Kind of Blows and Thrusts, and the Pursuit to only about half a Dozen very plain and easie Lessons, for offending by both Blow and Thrust. I say, this being so; and that this Author can have no mean or selfish End in it; but upon the contrary, by improving of the Art, to preserve and save People's Honour and Lives, when unfortunately engag'd in an Occasion with Sharps; is it not Matter of Wonder, and most unaccountable, that the Masters, to whose Hands this Book has come, do not either frankly follow this good Advice, which so much tends to the Preservation of Mens Persons, or otherwise offer sufficient Reasons (which I don't believe they well can, if they have seriously and with Attention perused his Book, the Author having answer'd in it all the material Objections

can

can be brought againſt it) for diſcovering the Imperfection and Inſufficiency of this new and ſafe Method of Defence, ſo generouſly and earneſtly offer'd to them.

I confeſs, for my own Part, I can give no other Reaſon for it but this; That, as in Matters of Religion, Men are commonly fixt in that Perſuaſion, to which they are educated from their Youth, whether *Jewiſh*, *Mahometan*, or *Roman Catholick*; (for a *Mahometan*, or *Jew*, ſtick as cloſe to, and believe, and depend as much upon the Certainty of their *Creeds*, as the moſt preciſely head-ſtrong and inflexible Fanatick, of either Whig, or Tory amongſt us) and reſt ſatisfy'd, that they are in the right Way to Salvation, without ever examining further, altho' there are other Syſtems of Religion, lying before them, and open to their View, which, if ſeriouſly examined, would be found more conſonant and agreeable to both Reaſon and Scripture: ſo in all Arts and Employments, particularly, that of the Art of the Sword; Theſe Maſters having been taught the Common Method keep cloſe to it, and never think either of improving it, or falling upon a better and ſafer, but jog on in the old imperfect and unſecure Road, from Maſter to Provo, and provided they get but a Livelyhood by it, trouble themſelves very little either about the Improvement of the Art, or Safety of their Scholar's Perſons; I always except the more curious Maſters out of this *Category*.

This I take to be the true Reaſon of their continuing in their old Rot, and not thoro'ly examining the Importance and Uſefulneſs of ſo very conſiderable an Improvement in the Art of Defence, as is ſo earneſtly offer'd to them by this Gentleman, in his *New Method*, in Behalf of which, I could ſay a great deal more, were not my Letter already too long; but knowing you to be not only a great Lover of the Art, but alſo a very knowing and judicious Sword-man, I recommend the ſerious Peruſal of the Book it ſelf to you, with which I am perſuaded you will be very well ſatisfy'd. If you judge theſe few Obſervations may be of Uſe to the Publick, I allow you to print them, and ſhall conclude with that very appoſite Sentence, which the Author has in his Title Page. *Gladiatura, non ſolum ad Honoris, Vitæque Conſervationem; ſed etiam ad Corporis, atque Animæ Relaxationem, perquam neceſſaria.* Which I Engliſh thus:

Fencing for Diverſion does not only ſerve,
It Life, as well as Honour, doth preſerve;
The Manly'ſt Exerciſe of Heroick Kind,
To chear the Body, and relax the Mind.

*London*, Oct. 29. 1714.

Sol. R,
*I am your Obliged and very Humble Servant*, H. B.

X 143944